

A SURPRISING SUPERIOR 50 MILE

by Bob Metzger

Despite a successful one-year experiment as an out-and-back race, the Superior Trail 50 Mile (ST50) returned to its traditional and popular point-to-point format in 2004. For the convenience and safety of runners, private bus transportation was made available from race headquarters (and finish line) at the Caribou Highlands Lodge in Lutsen to the start at the Finland Recreation Center. The bumpy 45-minute pre-dawn bus ride also served notice to the participants that it would be a long, tough trip back to the Lodge on foot. But along the way, they all knew they would be treated to spectacular views of Lake Superior from the most beautiful forest trails in the state of Minnesota. Thus, the mood on the bus was an appropriate mixture of excitement, apprehension, and sleep deprivation.

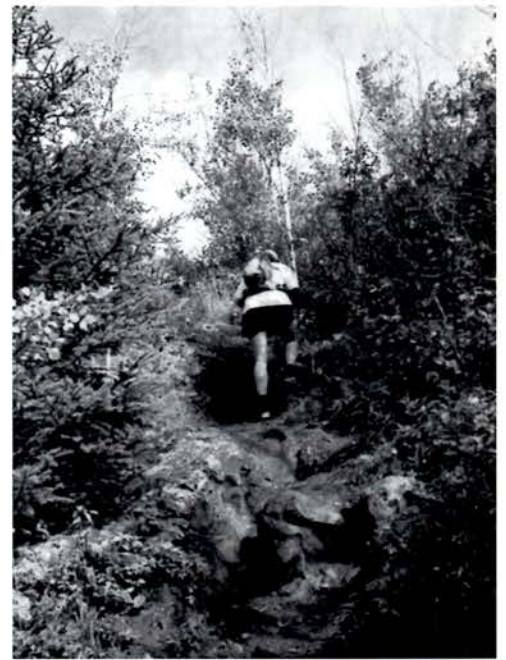
The 50-mile distance was reported in the race information packet as being officially 52.3 miles, and was alleged to be in excess of 55 miles by at least one person involved with mapping and measurement of the trail. In that spirit, many veteran participants reported that the race definitely gets longer each year. The Superior Hiking Trail (SHT), on which the event is held, is notorious for its roots, rocks, and relentless short, steep ascents and descents through the aptly named Sawtooth Mountains. This year, the ST50 started at 6:00 am sharp, on typically rocky, rooty single-track trail. Noting that in the deep woods that comprise about 90-percent of the course, it is quite dark for the hour after sunrise (6:27 a.m. on race day) as well as the hour before sunset (7:34 p.m.), many race veterans suspected that not only would they be starting but also likely finishing in darkness, and planned accordingly. Those who did had every right to feel pretty smug about their fortunetelling abilities at the end of the day.

As runners gathered at the start, they were greeted with cool, damp air, and a slight threat of early morning thunderstorms. The rain never materialized, but with the temperature and dew point in the low 60s, many seemed to struggle with evaporative cooling early on. The finishing times would be recorded through fourteen and a half hours, and a surprising percentage of the field faced the startling

realization when they reached aid station number one, at 7.5 miles, they were not likely to finish under that 14:30 goal. By the time many reached the seventh (and last) aid station at mile 45.7, it was obvious that they would be responsible for recording their own finishing times. In the end, only 32 of the 46 finishers were able to beat the 14:30 standard, and another dozen or more didn't make it to the finish at all. And despite starting 27 minutes before sunrise, a mere 24 of those 46 finishers were done before sunset. But all were treated to a beautiful, sunny, albeit humid day, an abundance of mushrooms of every shape and size, an assortment of wildlife, and the yellow and red hues signaling the onset of autumn. Those who were still on the trail after sunset enjoyed a quick drop of air temperature, and a crystal clear night sky studded with about a zillion stars.

The finishers were led by locals Steve Schuder and Deb Bennett. Steve lives at the southern end of the trail, in Duluth, and Deb lives near the northern end of the more than 200-mile long trail, near the Canadian border, in Hovland. Steve was the only runner to break 10 hours this year, and did it with emphasis, outrunning Chris Hagen by 45 minutes. Deb was hot on Chris' heels, finishing just three minutes behind him, with Kim Holak a mere four minutes behind Deb.

Race directors Rick and Linda Lindquist did another fantastic job with the ST50. This year, for the first time ever, they also offered a point-to-point trail marathon, and managed to get even more folks hooked on the beauty and allure of the SHT. An impressive 50 runners finished the marathon, which started at 9:00 a.m. near the halfway point of the ST50, and followed the remainder of the ST50 route to the Lodge. Rick and Linda will once again direct the Superior Trail 25 Km and 50 Km in May 2005. Larry Pederson will assume responsibilities for the September 2005 marathon and 50-mile. Information for all four races will continue to be available at <http://www.superiortrailrace.com>. Please note that the web site for the Superior Trail 100 Mile is <http://www.superiortrail100.com>. The 100-mile is operated under independent management from the shorter Superior



The Superior 50-mile is not for the faint of heart.
Photo by Bob Metzger

Superior Trail 50 Mile

Lutsen, Minnesota

September 11

Tough trails

1. Steve Schuder, 40	9:34:00
2. Chris Hagen, 30, WI	10:19:05
3. Deb Bennett, 45	10:22:27
4. Kim Holak, 35	10:26:45
5. David Jorde, 34	10:56:37
6. Michael Scrandrett, 50	11:01:34
7. Patrick Susnik, 39	11:29:45
8. Natalie Lozier, 28, OR	11:37:00
Austin Ramsland, 29, OR	11:37:00
10. Jim Brown, 46, WI	11:44:25
11. Matt Long, 48, WI	11:50:28
12. Jeff Allen, 39	12:28:50
13. Jay McDonald, 34, WI	12:28:51
14. Herb Byun, 60	12:30:12
15. Steven Bush, 44	12:32:36
16. Matthew Daly, 38	12:48:49
17. Barry Breffle, 33, IA	12:50:10
18. Gary Hemmelgarn, 53, OH	12:55:05
19. Steve Krampe, 54	13:02:26
20. Rob Smith, 40, WI	13:07:34
21. Andy Nordeen, 46, WI	13:07:42
22. Glen Hill, 55, WI	13:16:59
23. Luke Sydow, 36	13:20:37
Dave Sarvela, 36	13:20:37
25. J Mike Millonig, 49	13:42:10
26. Larry Ochsendorf, 59	13:42:15
27. Kevin Smith, 40, SD	13:45:31
28. James Ehasz, 51, WI	13:53:27
29. John Montwill, 43	13:54:15
30. Valeria Shuster, 28	13:54:30
31. Mark Manning, 43	14:09:29
Angie Puent, 33, WI	14:09:29
33. Julie Berg, 39	NT
34. Peter Hoag, 50	NT
35. Ben Holmes, 47, KS	NT
36. Lisa Karandanis, 41, WI	NT
37. Chris Markham, 52	NT
38. Les Martisko, 60	NT
39. Bob Metzger, 53	NT
40. Norm Yarger, 65, IL	NT
41. Kevin Carboni, 45, WI	NT
42. Joann Fallis, 52	NT
43. Rick Kucinski, 52	NT